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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that because (1) adult learners of English as a Second Language face great challenges in communicating with native English speakers; and (2) native English-speakers can learn strategies to compensate for some of these difficulties, there is a need for instruction in these strategies and skills for Americans in international business. The nature of miscommunication in international contexts is examined, including such factors as vocabulary, idioms and lexical collocations, accent and pronunciation (or in written communication, spelling and handwriting), discourse strategies, and style or register. The solution proposed is an instructional module designed to teach American students of international business some ways to facilitate communication with non-native English-speakers. The approach is based on a model of the effects of register on communication, particularly in disparate dialects, and on analysis of the characteristics of International English. With the instructional module, students are made aware of potential communication problems and common patterns in non-native English, and perform exercises in receptive, productive, and interactive skills. These exercises focus on awkward grammar, spellings, and word choices, problematic vocabulary, recognition of idioms, accents, and colloquial speech. The exercises culminate with oral and written communications with non-native speakers. (MSE)

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Going Beyond Standard English: An Instructional Module for Improving International Business Communication

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Going Beyond Standard English: An Instructional Module for Improving International Business Communication

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Second language learners of English in the United States often complain that their ESL teachers are the only Americans with whom they feel they can communicate. This is evidence of at least two things: (1) adult learners of English face enormous challenges in communicating with native English speakers; and (2) there are, however, native English speakers who have learned both to understand their nonnative conversational partners and to speak in a way that is comprehensible to them. The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the need for this type of communicative skill among Americans who engage in international business. In order to accomplish this purpose, we will first attempt to characterize the nature of linguistic miscommunication in international contexts, and will then propose at least a partial solution to the problem in the form of a teaching module intended for American students of international business.

We begin with the assumption that there is, in fact, a problem of miscommunication in international business contexts. Much of the current available literature attributes this problem to cultural factors (Dulek, Fielden, & Hill, 1991; Hall, 1976; Ricks, 1983). We acknowledge that cultural factors are a significant cause of miscommunication in the international setting, but would argue that linguistic factors are equally (if not more) responsible for many instances of interpersonal

miscommunication in an international context. Although it is often difficult to separate language from culture, it is factors of the more purely linguistic sort that we wish to focus on here. We will attempt to characterize these factors generally, and will also provide some evidence for their reality.

Linguistic Miscommunication

As a starting point, one of the most obvious linguistic factors affecting communicative effectiveness is vocabulary. Words carry not only referential information, but are also associated with various connotations according to the contexts in which they have been experienced. One consequence of this is that words which carry either positive or negative connotations for Americans often carry the opposite connotations for people of differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, the word "senator" still carries a certain degree of prestige in the U.S., but it has become a negative term in Nigeria (Adekunle, 1985, p. 15).

Vocabulary is also involved in miscommunication when the hearer does not know the meaning of a word used by the speaker. All of us who have learned and communicated in a foreign language are well aware of the overwhelming commonness of this problem for the nonnative speaker. Nevertheless, this is a relatively easy problem to identify and solve. The conversational partner who does not understand a word can often ask for clarification immediately, or can even use a dictionary. A far worse problem occurs when a conversational participant assumes that he or she

does understand the meaning of a particular word, but actually understands the word to mean something quite different from what was intended.

Misunderstandings related to lexical meaning are especially common when they are embedded in idioms or lexical collocations (such as phrasal verbs). Idioms and lexical collocations are not only problematic for nonnative speakers of English, but also for natives. For nonnatives, the reason for their difficulty is quite obvious: the meaning of an idiom or lexical collocation is often substantially different than the sum of meaning of the individual words of which it is composed. Thus, language learners often cannot rely on their understanding of individual words when interpreting idioms and lexical collocations. They must learn these interpretations holistically and individually through experience.

It is not quite so obvious why native English speakers would have difficulty understanding English idioms. In order to understand why this is the case, it is helpful to have a realization of the cultural and metaphorical distinctiveness of indigenous varieties of English—otherwise known as World Englishes. The idioms used in Indian English and Nigerian English, for example, are based primarily on the metaphors that are useful and conventional in these societies. In an unpublished study of World Englishes conducted in 1992 by one of the co-authors of this paper, it was found, among other things, that native English speakers often do not understand the use of metaphor in World English idioms.

Many foreign language learners, at least in the beginning phases of their language acquisition, assume that they can directly translate idiomatic phrases from their native language into the target language. This often results in a temporary breakdown of communication. Consider, for example, how communicatively successful this strategy would be for a Finn using the following common Finnish idioms directly translated into English.

Finnish:	Yritätkö vetää nenästä?
Literal Transl.:	Are you trying to pull from the nose?
Idiomatic Transl:	Are you pulling my leg?

Finnish:	Se pitää paikkansa.
Literal Transl.:	It holds its place.
Idiomatic Transl:	It is true.

Finnish:	Lyön sinut laudalta.
Literal Transl.:	I will hit you off the board.
Idiomatic Transl:	I will beat you (i.e., I will win).

Finnish:	Minä putosin kärryiltä.
Literal Transl.:	I fell off the wagon.
Idiomatic Transl:	I don't understand.

Another potential linguistic cause of miscommunication is accent and pronunciation. (Note that the written-language

correlates to these would be spelling and handwriting). An unfamiliar or strong accent can not only obscure words that would otherwise be comprehensible to the listener, but it can also carry its own meanings and implicatures. In his (1982) book entitled "Discourse Strategies," John Gumperz gives considerable attention to the types of meaning that are conveyed by accent, stress, intonation, and other prosodic features. One of his illustrative examples concerns a situation in which an Indian bus driver in London is mistaken as being rude by some native Londoners. The source of the miscommunication was the bus driver's stress and pitch pattern on the word "please" in the sentence: "Exact change, please" (Gumperz, pp. 168-170). This pattern of stress is considered normal and polite by West Indians, but carries negative connotations in most native English dialects. Consider also how the interaction between stress and pitch on a single word—for example, the word "could"—can affect what it means.

I COULD (fast falling) = e.g., "I am definitely able to do that."

I COULD (slow rising-falling) = e.g., "I might be able to do that, but…"

I COULD (fast rising) = e.g., "Do you mean that it's alright if I do that?"

I COULD (slow falling-rising) = e.g., "Are you sure that I can do that?"

The implicature conveyed by stress and pitch patterns is not universal, but rather varies from language to language, and sometimes from dialect to dialect. When two speakers from two different linguistic backgrounds interact, they are likely to use and interpret prosody in a way that is consistent with their native-language backgrounds. This can clearly result in miscommunication. As an example from our own experience learning Scandinavian languages, we often misunderstood questions to be statements because, in these languages, people generally do not use rising pitch in questions—which was the contextual cue that we are accustomed to rely on in English.

In addition to vocabulary, idioms, and prosody, linguistic miscommunication can also be the result of conversational participants' different discourse strategies. Gumperz (1982) says that, although individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds may exhibit complete competence in the production of grammatical sentences in a given language, they may differ significantly in "what they perceive as meaningful discourse cues" (p. 172). Conversations often begin with an introductory phase in which the interlocutors negotiate the speech activity they will engage in. It is here where differences in expectation are adjusted. If these differences are not worked out, then the conversation will be asynchronous and the conversational partners are likely to misunderstand each other. Such misunderstanding can

result in negative attitudes—even stereotypes—about one another. According to Gumperz (1982), the failure to adjust differences in expectation while negotiating the frame for the conversation is generally the result of differences in the interlocutors' linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge.

The final linguistic factor involved in miscommunication that we will identify here is the use of style or register. In some sense, register subsumes all of the other factors that we have previously discussed. Yet, register can be analyzed as a separate entity. By way of definition, styles of speaking and registers are sets of linguistic features that reflect levels of formality and situational appropriateness (Wardhaugh, 1986, p. 48). Each situational context determines a certain range of grammatical, phonological, and lexical devices that are conventional and appropriate in that context. Registers often reflect a person's age, education, status, and attitude toward the conversational context and his or her audience. Speakers use different registers for intimate, casual, informal, semi-formal, and formal contexts. Sometimes we even use what are referred to as simplified registers. Simplified registers include Baby Talk, Foreigner Talk, Telegraphese, Road-Sign Language, and other such varieties of language whose use is constrained by social factors. Baby Talk is the simplified variety of language that many adults (especially mothers) use when speaking to young children. Foreigner Talk is the simplified variety of language that many native speakers often use when speaking to nonnative speakers whom they presume to lack proficiency in the base language. Telegraphese and most other

simplified registers, on the other hand, are generally used between native speakers in special situations in which they believe linguistic simplification will facilitate efficiency.

We will discuss the notion of register later in more detail as we propose our classroom module. The point we want to emphasize at this time is that a person's choice of register can result in a most unfortunate type of miscommunication: the miscommunication of intent and attitude. An example of this was related to us by a Korean music professor who came to Indiana University to receive post-doctoral training. When speaking with Americans, he was often spoken down to and treated as if he lacked intelligence—simply because he could not express in English the intelligent ideas that he did have. We suspect that the Americans he referred to utilized the simplified register known as Foreigner Talk. Foreigner Talk has many of the same features as Baby Talk, and it is quite understandable how the use of this register can give the addressee the impression of being talked down to. An empirical study conducted by Jürgen Meisel (1980) lends support to this assumption. He found that Turkish immigrants in Germany are generally offended by the Foreigner Talk that native Germans use when speaking to them.

Now that we have given a general characterization of the nature of linguistically-based miscommunication, let us summarize our position. The complete breakdown of communication in international business situations is presumably relatively rare (see Luoma, 1993), but the potential for miscommunication is always present. Perhaps the most common and most unfortunate type

of miscommunication is the miscommunication of intent. When miscommunication occurs between native and nonnative speakers of English (or any language), either or both of the conversational partners may be to blame for the miscommunication. The speaker, whether a native or nonnative speaker, may use the language in a way that is vague, ambiguous, unfamiliar, or misleading to the listener. The listener, whether native or nonnative, may fail to comprehend or may misinterpret what was intended by the speaker. These four potential foci of miscommunication are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1

Four Potential Foci of Miscommunication in a Native-Nonnative Interaction

	Native	Nonnative
Speaker	1	3
Listener	2	4

Solutions

Given that there are four potential conversational roles from which miscommunication can arise in native-nonnative interactions, it is interesting that most solutions proposed in the past have focused primarily on only two of these roles--specifically the nonnative speaker and the nonnative listener. It is often assumed that problems of international communication can be completely resolved if one of the international conversational partners is trained thoroughly in the language and culture of the other. We acknowledge that this is a necessary goal, but would argue that it

is not a complete solution. On the one hand, it is impossible for two people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to communicate unless one of the two has become familiar with the language and culture of the other. However, on the other hand, so few nonnative speakers genuinely achieve native-like proficiency in a target language that optimal communication in the base language of a native-nonnative interaction is often only attainable if the native speaker of the base language has learned to accommodate his or her nonnative interlocutor. In other words, the burden of efficient communication is too great for the nonnative speaker to carry alone. This is precisely what is indicated by the anecdotal evidence from learners of English who can communicate in English only with their ESL instructors—i.e., with native speakers of English who have learned to accommodate nonnative speakers.

While we encourage Americans (and other native English speakers) to learn foreign languages and cultures to increase their potential to understand and communicate with their international associates, this ultimately only shifts the problem. That is, the American who does this agrees to assume the role and responsibilities of the nonnative speaker, but we are still left with the potential problems of miscommunication that might arise on the part of the native speaker of whatever language is being used as the medium of communication.

What we propose, for our part, is an instructional module designed to teach American students of international business ways of using English that will facilitate them and their nonnative

business counterparts. In other words, we will focus our efforts on the conversational roles associated with the native speaker and native listener. The end goal is for the students to become more competent and more accommodating in the ways they both use and interpret "International English."

To become a more competent listener of a nonnative speaker often requires a good deal of experience. In addition to experience, a knowledge of the nonnative speaker's native language and culture is certainly helpful. However, providing sufficient experience and training in individual cultures and languages is clearly too ambitious for a classroom module. We believe that it is possible, however, to provide the students with sufficient examples, exercises, and activities for them to become informed and active learners in their own right.

Becoming an accommodating speaker of International English also requires experience and an awareness of the nonnative listener's background. Although there are many problematic variables involved in accommodation, we propose that many of these are solved simply by learning to select and use a speech register appropriate to the international context. The native speaker of English is benefitted by using a register that most closely converges with registers accessible to the nonnative listener. This requires the native English speaker to go beyond his or her native dialect, and even beyond standard English. In the next section we present a model that will help students to visualize the effects of register on international communication. This

model serves as the theoretical framework for our instructional module.

Going Beyond Standard English

Giles (1973) illustrates the relationship between dialect and register with the following diagram (see Figure 1). Although Giles is primarily concerned with accent mobility, Figure 1 applies also to variances in lexical choice, grammatical devices, and pragmatic strategies in different dialects and registers.

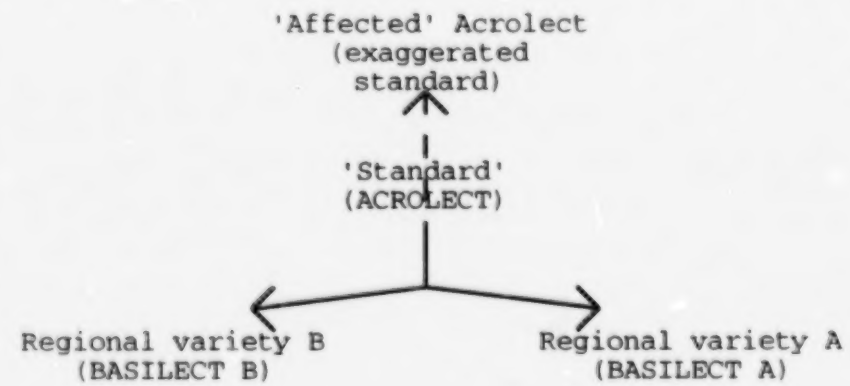

Figure 1. The accent repertoire. (Giles, 1973, p. 90)

In Figure 1, the horizontal axis represents differences in dialect, and the vertical axis corresponds to differences in register. One of Giles' premises is that every speaker of a language possesses a repertoire of both dialects and registers. With regard to the model in Figure 1, this would mean that the speaker is able to vary his or her speech both horizontally and vertically (i.e., both in dialect and register). Some speakers have larger dialect and register repertoires than others. For

example, a man who grew up in Alabama and then moved to Massachusetts, is likely to have a larger dialect repertoire than another man who has never left Alabama. The size of a speaker's register repertoire, on the other hand, corresponds more closely with the number of different kinds of situational contexts in which the speaker has an appropriate communicative competence. In general, higher education increases a speaker's register mobility—often with the result that the speaker becomes proficient in the standard, or even in the exaggerated standard.

Although Figure 1 is helpful, the triangular diagram below is better at capturing the general relationship between the dialect and register continua.

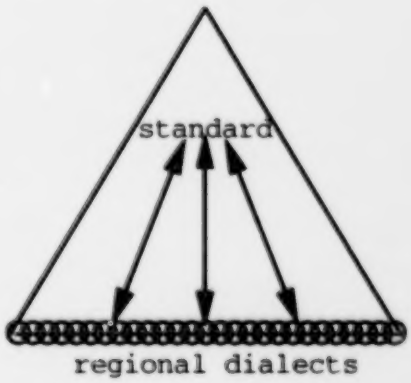

FIGURE 2. The dialect/ register triangle.

The horizontal base in the triangle in Figure 2 is the continuum of overlapping regional dialects. On the vertical axis, the regional dialects—in their strongest form—represent one extreme of the register continuum. One thing that Figure 2 shows, but which Figure 1 does not, is that the standard register is

essentially equally accessible from all of the regional dialects. One might argue, however, that standard American English is more accessible from the milder midwest dialects than from Southern or New England dialects. In order to account for this, we could stipulate that the milder dialects are in the middle of the dialect continuum, and are therefore somewhat closer and more directly related to the standard. Whatever the case, our point is that the standard register is the point at which the speech produced by educated speakers from different dialects most closely converges. Thus, for example, a professor from Alabama and a professor from Ireland should find it easier to communicate with each other than would be the case for two relatively uneducated, untraveled persons from these regions.

Figure 2 is superior to Figure 1 in many ways, but more improvements can still be made. For example, how does Figure 2 account for simplified registers, such as Baby Talk, Foreigner Talk, and Telegraphese? Convergence from different dialects can also be seen with these simplified registers. That is, the features of simplification in an extreme form of a simplified register are essentially the same regardless of the dialect the speaker speaks natively (Meisel, 1980; Ferguson & DeBose, 1977). Yet, simplified registers should certainly not be likened to the educated and prestigious standard register. As was mentioned earlier, simplified registers carry no prestige. These facts seem to suggest the need for the addition to Figure 2 of an inverted triangle representing simplified registers. Thus, we have the following:

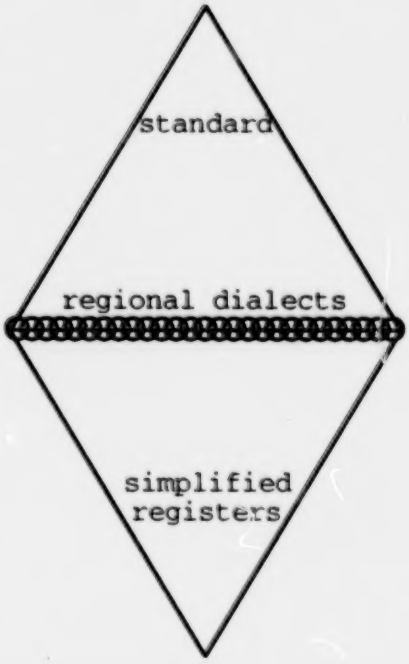

Figure 3. The dialect/register diamond.

If Figure 3 is a useful representation of the relationship between native English dialects and registers, then a further modification needs to be made to the diagram to show how the native dialects and registers are related to the English of nonnative speakers. To do this, we will begin with the assumption that there are at least two distinct types of nonnative English: (1) the indigenous varieties of English—often referred to as World Englishes—which are not spoken natively, but which have acquired their own conventions and identities; and (2) the varieties of English spoken by those who have learned it as a foreign language. Each of these general varieties of English should be represented with its own diamond-shaped diagram. Adding these to our model results in the following prism-shaped diagram:

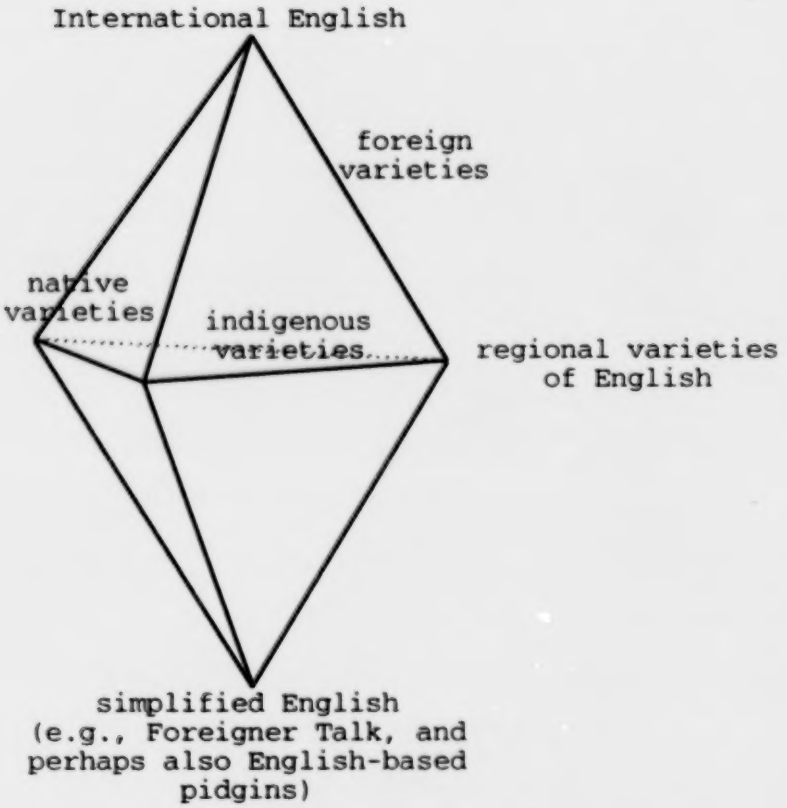

Figure 4. Native and nonnative varieties of English.

With a model in place, we are now ready to make some generalizations concerning the conversational interactions between native and nonnative speakers of English. The first generalization is that there are two natural points of convergence between native and nonnative varieties of English. The first of these occurs at the upper end of the register continuum. This is what we have labelled as "International English." Although such a register as "International English" may be more an idealization than an objectively analyzable phenomenon, this notion is helpful for the purposes of this paper. Clearly, there are such phenomena as standard American English, standard British English (i.e., RP

English), standard Australian English, and so forth. It is also generally acknowledged that there is a point at which these registers converge. This point is sometimes referred to as World English, although this term is often reserved for reference to an indigenous variety of English. World English is observable in international scholarly writing and in international news articles that are written by native English speakers for an international audience. Therefore, World English represents the upper end of the native English registers, whereas International English—as we are using the term here—refers to a point slightly beyond the native standard where the native registers converge with nonnative varieties of English.

The second natural point of convergence between the native and nonnative varieties of English is at the lower end of the register continuum. Empirical and anecdotal evidence confirms that conversational interactions between native and nonnative speakers does, indeed, often occur at the level of Foreigner Talk. There is nothing a priori wrong with communicating in a simplified register. However, as we indicated earlier, nonnative speakers are often insulted when addressed in Foreigner Talk. This fact alone makes it undesirable for a native speaker to use this register. Our fundamental premise, then, is that international business communication is optimal only at the upper end of the register continuum.

Let us now briefly characterize the nature of the register we have identified as International English. As an upper register, one of its characteristics is a general paucity of idioms and

collocations. The situational appropriateness of idioms is primarily limited to lower and more casual registers. One important point that needs to be made, however, is that even though International English is to be considered an upper register, it does not have to be stiff, awkward, and overly formal. International English is simply the natural result of realizing the relationship between oneself as a speaker and one's audience. This realization must take into account the status relationship between the speaker and listener, and must also take into account the extent of the interlocutors' shared linguistic and professional backgrounds. Since idioms are generally very culture-specific, their use could defy the diverse nature of an international communicative context. That is, an idiom is inappropriate when the listener's background makes it unlikely that he or she will interpret it correctly.

Another feature of International English (and upper registers in general) is that it exhibits a tendency to avoid ambiguity. This often results in longer sentences with several embedded clauses. For example, rather than saying, "Everyone needs something," a person speaking an upper register would be likely to disambiguate this by saying either "There is one thing that everyone needs" or "Everyone needs one thing or another."

The avoidance of ambiguity is partially achieved by the tendency to keep a one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. This is one reason why idioms are less common in upper registers—i.e., they do not exhibit a one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. Lexical collocations are also avoided,

but perhaps not in the same way as idioms are. Many lexical collocations can be substituted with single words, and in most cases, these single-word substitutes are preferred in upper registers. Following is a brief list of lexical collocations and their single-word, upper-register counterparts.

Lexical Collocation	Upper-register Counterpart
ask for	request
look over	examine
take away	remove
talk about	discuss
think about	ponder

One of the differences between International English and Foreigner Talk is that, in Foreigner Talk, the speaker does not generally use these upper-register words, nor does he or she use the full lexical collocation. Foreigner Talk and simplified registers characteristically involve the omission of prepositions, verb particles, auxiliary verbs, articles and other function words and grammatical devices. Presumably, this occurs primarily when the speaker assumes that the listener lacks proficiency in the non-simplified registers. This assumption should not be made by native English speakers when engaging in conversation with their nonnative business counterparts. The native speaker should be aware that the nonnative speaker is prepared to discuss important matters at a high level of mutual respect. The native speaker should also be aware that his or her nonnative interlocutor is

likely to have received English training in precisely the type of English we have referred to as International English—i.e., an idealized upper register of English. This is the type of English that is prescribed by most ESL textbooks and instructors.

The Instructional Module

The main goals of the instructional module are to help students 1) to gain an awareness of some linguistically-based problems that can occur in international communications, 2) to gain familiarity with English written and spoken by nonnative speakers, and 3) to develop specific skills that will facilitate better communication in an international context. The previous sections of this paper provide material to be presented in the first two components of the module. The first component of the module consists of a brief overview of the potential problems inherent in international English communication. In the second component, the register model is presented to help the students conceptualize the possible dynamics of their International English interactions. The third component consists of nine exercises designed to help students develop and practice specific skills that will increase their ability to communicate effectively in an international context. The exercises are of three types: receptive, productive, and interactive.

The first four exercises focus on receptive skills—they are intended to help students better understand speech and writing produced by nonnative users of English. Exercise one is intended to increase the students' familiarity with the seemingly awkward

grammatical constructions, spellings, and word choices of English written by nonnative speakers. The exercise consists of reading a brief article from a foreign English language newspaper such as the Moscow News Weekly or the Sunday News from Tanzania. The following is a brief excerpt from an article in the Moscow News Weekly (Feb. 18-24, 1994) titled "A multimedia revolution near at hand in Russia."

> The very nature of modern show business implies that it should be approached from the standpoint of multimedia with the use of the latest breakthroughs in advertising, satellite television and computer video-technology. The artist bringing out a new record appears on your screen, you unwittingly take over his image, newspapers, magazines and books keep telling you the legend of his life and daily behaviour in great detail. His words become wellknown and very fashionable.

Students could discuss their general reaction to the language of the article, including which parts, if any, they found difficult to understand.

Exercise two helps students develop the ability to identify vocabulary used by nonnative speakers that may be easily misunderstood and might require greater clarification. The instructor presents several passages containing unusual vocabulary and the students identify the questionable words and discuss possible meanings. The following is an example from a Romanian English-language paper:

> DEFI 2001 is the name of the youngest joint Romanian-French society founded this autumn through the association of the former Romanian society Delta Systems with the French firm Cofim (Corporation Financiere et des Marches). The society deals with industrial informatics, flight simulators and printing layout.

In this passage, the word "society" seems to be used in place of "company." DEFI 2001 is referred to as a "joint Romanian-French society," leading one to believe the concern is a joint venture. An individual firm, Delta Systems, is also referred to as a "society," while the French partner Cofim is referred to as a "firm." It is difficult to establish the exact meaning of "society" in this context. Also problematic is the phrase "industrial informatics," which could refer to information systems design, computer hardware used to monitor or control manufacturing, or software for industrial applications. Finally, the term "printing layout" is unclear. It could refer to a form of desk top publishing services, to the actual planning of layouts for printing machinery, or merely to the ability to print detailed plans. Students could discuss their choice of the most plausible meanings, based on the overall context.

Exercise three helps students develop the ability to pick out foreign idioms and to better interpret, or at least avoid misinterpreting, their meanings. In this exercise, students are first given a list of unusual foreign idioms without any context. They are asked to guess the meaning of each idiom. The students are then given another list of the same idioms within the broader

context of a sentence or paragraph that may or may not shed light on their meaning. For example, students could speculate on the meaning of the idiom "with an aim to fry," which we found in a Nigerian newspaper. Students could then be given the same idiom in the context in which it was authentically encountered.

> Your Excellency, we believe that only your government can positively appreciate the enormity of the problems being brewed by the non-Onitsha Igbos <u>with an aim to fry</u> the Onitsha Indigenes and as such, only your government can turn the table in favour of the Onitsha people. (New Nigerian, No. 8235, Wednesday, September 30, 1992
> Your Views, p. 4)

interpretation: <u>with an intent to exploit/harm</u>

Exercise four is an aural exercise designed to help students increase their familiarity with a wide variety of foreign accents. The exercise is also meant to help students develop the skill of picking out key words in the spoken passage and deducing the meaning of the passage based on the key words, even though the phrase may at first seem unintelligible. For this exercise, the instructor plays a tape containing recordings of nonnative English speech. After each short passage, students write down key words and the general meaning. The excerpts gradually increase in difficulty.

The next exercise focuses on productive skills, in that it requires the students to produce written English that nears the top of the model. Exercise five helps the student to gain the

ability to "translate" very colloquial speech into International English. The student is given a passage such as the following:

> I have to head out for Bonn in the morning to catch the last day of a trade show. Then I'm going over to Milan to get together with the manager of our Italian subsidiary to hash out the details of an expansion proposal. Finally, I'm stopping by Paris to check out the progress of our European ad set-up with our marketing people there.

The student would hopefully reword the passage in a way similar to the following:

> I will travel to Bonn in the morning to attend a trade show. I will then go to Milan to meet with the manager of our Italian subsidiary and discuss an expansion plan. Finally, I will travel to Paris to monitor the progress of our European advertising plan with members of our marketing staff there.

The last several exercises are interactive. For these exercises, students should get in groups of two. For exercise six, one person tells their partner about a recent activity as if their partner was a nonnative speaker of English. The partner listens and notes instances of Foreigner Talk, of overly complex usages, improper use of idioms or colloquialisms, the speed of speech, and the overall clarity of expression. The partner gives feedback to the speaker, and then the roles are reversed and the exercise is repeated.

The last three exercises involve interaction with people who are not members of the class. For exercise seven, the instructor

arranges for a conference call during class time with a businessperson from another country. Many universities have the technical capacity to arrange such a call. The students interact with the guest by asking questions about the person's background, company, the conditions for business in the country, or whatever else they may be interested in. After the conversation has ended, the instructor leads a discussion on the difficulties the students encountered in understanding or in making themselves understood.

Exercise eight requires the students to talk to a nonnative speaker of English outside of class. They might write a brief report of their interaction, including a discussion of the real or potential difficulties of the communication and how the student resolved or attempted to resolve those difficulties.

Finally, exercise nine requires that the instructor develop a connection with a business English class from another country. Students are matched with a partner in the foreign class and exchange correspondence. The content of the correspondence may be left up to the students, or could be centered around a fictional business negotiation. A class discussion could be held on the results of the letter exchange, or students could report on the results of their interactions through a writing assignment. This type of activity will form a significant component of a course in international business communication soon to be offered jointly at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis, Åbo Akademi in Finland, and Handelschogeschool Antwerpen in Belgium.

Conclusion

Although English is widely recognized as the dominant language of international business throughout most of the world, not all varieties of English are alike. For example, linguists have recently focused attention on the concept of World Englishes—distinct varieties of nonnative English that may differ significantly from both British and American usages. In addition, many international executives are speaking English as a foreign language—further adding to the varieties of English spoken internationally. Native speakers of English need to be familiar with the complexities of International English and sensitive to the language-based communication problems that can be encountered when speaking English in an international context. It is our hope that this instructional module will aid educators in their attempt to address the problems of international miscommunication arising from differences in native and nonnative English usages.

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